

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2016

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Department of Homeland Security
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske:

Thank you for your continued leadership of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Recently, the agency's agreement to enter into a public-private partnership with Dell, Inc. to fund additional hours of operation for south-bound commercial traffic went into effect at the Santa Teresa Port of Entry (POE). To encourage businesses to take advantage of extended hours, we would appreciate that all CBP informational materials reflect this change and be made available to the public. Southern New Mexico is a fast-growing international trade center, and this additional capacity allows it to continue to expand.

Recent federal and private investments at the Santa Teresa POE surrounding areas have helped expand and improve the efficiency of trade along the New Mexico-Chihuahua international border. Additionally, a 2014 U.S. Commerce Department study reported that New Mexico led all U.S. states in goods export percentage growth to Mexico and is the fastest-growing state in the country for jobs related to international exports.

To build on this momentum, we must ensure efficient trade along the border, ease future flow of traffic in the years to come, and keep our ports of entry operating at full capacity. To this end, we respectfully request that you extend the weekday hours of operation for north-bound commercial traffic to align with the recent expansion of south-bound hours. We also ask that, upon the termination of the public-private partnership with Dell, CBP permanently extend both north-bound and south-bound commercial hours from 8 a.m. until midnight on weekdays. Finally, we request that hours be extended to 24 hours per day for pedestrian and privately owned vehicle (POV) traffic and that you work with the Mexican government to ensure it maintains corresponding hours.

Extending the hours at Santa Teresa POE would create numerous benefits for the border region and nation. The additional capacity would help increase bilateral trade, grow our economy, and create new jobs. The extended hours would also enable traffic that currently crosses in El Paso, Texas, to travel through New Mexico, thereby reducing heavy congestion and long wait times.

Moreover, an extension would take full advantage of the infrastructure improvements just south of the port, where there is now a paved highway running from Ciudad Juarez to the port of entry.

Thank you again for your commitment to our nation's borders. We look forward to continuing to work with you and CBP to keep our nation safe and secure and to ensure our border communities in New Mexico prosper from their unique bi-national culture and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Udall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being more prominent than the last name "Udall".

Tom Udall
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Heinrich". The signature is very stylized and cursive, with the first name "Martin" and last name "Heinrich" being intertwined.

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator